

Boulder parent: 'This will alienate people from the church'

Thomas C. Fox | Mar. 25, 2010



Joan Munson (Fox photo)

The pastor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Boulder, Colo., earlier this month informed a lesbian couple, active in the parish for three years and with two young girls in preschool that their children would not be able to attend the elementary school beginning in one year. The decision, leaked to the media apparently by a teacher at the school, has caused uproar in the community, and divide the parish.

[The women shared their story](#) [1]with *NCR* editor Tom Fox. The pastor, Fr. William Breslin, [explained his decision](#). [2]

Fox interviewed a number of parents with children at the school to see how the decision is affecting their families. Following is the third of these interviews, edited for length and clarity.

Joan Munson has three children at the Sacred Heart of Jesus School.

One of the things that really bothers me about the situation is that both of kids [of the lesbian couple] have been baptized in the Catholic church and the Catholic church has agreed to help raise them in the faith. If you're baptizing the children, then the church has the duty and the responsibility to allow them to be brought up in the faith.

These two women are not asking for rule changes, curriculum changes, even church doctrine changes. They are committed to raising and to practicing the Catholic faith. That's the part where the hypocrisy is the greatest. They don't want a political agenda. They don't want to change anything. They made it very clear that they are OK with the school's curriculum, with the Catholic curriculum, with everything, and this really bothers me.

The other thing that I think has been weighing heavy on my mind is that society has changed so much in so many years about homosexuality and on many issues with the church. I feel that at this point the leaders of the church are so completely out of touch with what is happening in our society with reference to gays and lesbians. Gays and lesbians are going to continue to have children, period. There is no turning back from that and we're going to have to do something to accommodate the children who want to be part of the Catholic faith.

This whole case is creating such a negative impact. I think that this is something that will further alienate people

who may have been on the border of becoming Catholic, or people who have been on the border who are Catholic and practicing Catholics, but they're not sure if they want to stay Catholic.

I cannot imagine anybody is going to want to send their kids to a Catholic school. Maybe there are some people who agree with this, OK, a small minority of people, but if I were a parent today who was looking at a school, I'd think really long and hard about sending my kids to a Catholic school.

It was the hardest parenting decision I have ever had to make and when we made it we were thrilled. But if I were that parent now, trying to determine where my kids would go to school, I would laugh at the thought of sending them to the Catholic school.

Now that I've been in Sacred Heart school for so many years, I love the school, and I want to stick up for the school because I don't think this incident represents anything about our school. But my biggest fear is that this whole issue is going to alienate even more people from the church.

Certainly it is going to alienate lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual people from the church. It's going to be creating an even greater rift and that's what troubles me for the future of our church and the future of our schools, not just Sacred Heart, but all schools.

I was reading the guidelines the U.S. bishops issued in 2006 regarding the raising of gay and lesbian children. What they state in there, because I did read this (I was just reviewing it again this morning), is that all children who are a product of any homosexual unions, if it is said, if the parents have agreed that they would raise their kids Catholic, and the priest truly believes that they have this at heart to have them baptized, then it is the church's responsibility to raise them in their faith.

We are talking about the U.S. bishops' conference saying that children of homosexuals have a right to be raised in the Catholic faith, so how does pushing them down the street to a public school go in line with these teachings?

What I am also concerned about is that there are gay and lesbian families in other schools in Denver and elsewhere. We know this. Are the archbishops of all of our different communities now going to have a witch hunt? This terrifies me.

[Tom Fox is NCR editor. His e-mail address is tfox@ncronline.org.]

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